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FROM ARIZONA TO CALIFORNIA IN THE EARLY '70s.

BY P. W. DOONER.

[Read July 1, 1895.]

After experiencing the vicissitudes of frontier journalism in Arizona for a few years I found myself on board the California bound stage at the town of Prescott, in the month of April, 1872. My fellow-passengers for California were two disappointed mining operators and a very clever and enterprising gentleman who represented the United States in the capacity of Indian Agent for the Mojave Indians.

Those were the days of Indian raids, and our path led through many defiles and passes that were then, and I have no doubt are still, marked by the humble little stone heaps or mounds that overlie the final resting places of those of the Argonauts of the '60s and '70s who fell before the arrows or bullets of the savage Apache Indian of that period.

The Arizona stage of those days was a sort of improvised battery, and in our case the armament consisted of four repeating rifles carried obliquely across the laps of the inmates so that two muzzles should protrude from each side door. In addition to these more formidable weapons there was one revolver to each passenger and two or more of these latter were disposed about the person and seat of the driver.

Thus equipped for war we took our departure from one of the prettiest towns, in one of the most charming locations anywhere in the West, and were soon whirling away behind four spirited horses that were guided by a professional driver of the old school, whose peculiar skill seemed to consist in a rare ability to have his stage forever upon the point of capsizing without once involving the threatened catastrophe.

But it must not be inferred that our armament was by any means a mere ostentatious display. It was only a few months prior to the date of our journey that the tragedy which has gone down to history as the "Wickenburg Massacre" was enacted upon the route over which we were to pass within the next succeeding twenty-four hours, and that event was the third of a series of successful Indian raids upon travelers by this road within the period of eighteen months, or thereabouts.

This was the particular tragedy in which the California-bound stage with seven passengers was attacked by a band of hostile Apache Indians,

resulting in the death of four persons, among whom was Frederick Loring, a young Bostonian of extraordinary promise in the world of letters, as well as a man of very distinguished presence and most fascinating address. He had lately graduated from Harvard and was returning home after a protracted outing across the continent when he became a passenger by the ill-fated stage. The atrocity of this massacre sent such a thrill of horror through the country that it was, in all probability, the immediate cause of the inauguration of the new policy of force that soon thereafter culminated in the complete and permanent subjugation of the hitherto unsubdued Apache. And thus, however deplorable his loss and the manner of his death, Fred Loring had not lived and died in vain.

It will thus be understood that the measures which were taken to defend our conveyance were presumably necessary, and besides this they had the sanction of custom and were the usual precautions observed by travelers to secure their safety over this route in those turbulent times.

But our party was one of the fortunate ones, for our stage ran the gauntlet without any adventure save a small panic occasioned by the accidental discharge of a gun in the hands of one of the party which, of course, suggested an attack until the incident was hurriedly explained.

But notwithstanding the safe arrival of our conveyance beyond the most westerly hostile outpost toward the afternoon of the third day, it was still a great relief to look upon the turbid waters of the Colorado river at the town of Ehrenberg, a few hours later, and to feel that we were about to enter a Land of Promise. It was at this place that we bade good-bye to Dr. Tanner, the Indian Agent; and before I dismiss the Doctor, this evening, I will give his estimate of the "Noble Red Man" of the reservation as a reasonable or reasoning animal. Replying to my inquiry in this particular I was requested by the Doctor to draw my inference from his narrative, which was briefly as follows: The Indian Bureau had suggested the placing of the Yuma and the Mojave Indians upon a single reservation located in the traditional territory of the Mojaves; but the strong opposition of the Mojaves, in council, invariably thwarted this economic purpose. Upon being questioned by the Agent as to the nature of the deliberations of the Mojave Council that resulted in such sturdy opposition, the Chief gravely stated that the Yumas were not any braver than squaws, and that if they should be brought to the Mojave reservation they would be sure to fall into the river and that the brave Mojaves would have to go into the water to pull them out. And so, to maintain this position the Mojaves held themselves ready to revolt.

The traveler who at the present time crosses the Colorado desert in a palace car and yet breathes out invective against the zephyrs that agitate its atmosphere, (as I am reliably informed that some of them have been known

to do,) because those breezes are a trifle sultry, is, I fear, a most degenerate production of our modern pampered civilization. In those pre-railroad days of which I speak the tourist was dragged slowly across this sandy expanse at a rate of progression by which the hours of the railroad train were almost lengthened into days—and the traveler of that heroic period didn't grumble about it either, but calmly, at least, if not coolly, submitted to the desiccating process; and those travelers were not always of the male sex either, for women were frequently passengers by the trans-desert stages of those days, and they were never the first to betray a lack of fortitude under the hardships or dangers incident to the journey.

Toward the close of our first day hitherward from the Colorado river we reached Chucawalla. Chucawalla was then, and is now I believe, a station where refreshments and lodging are supposed to be furnished. The place was just about as classic in its surroundings as the jingle of its name would suggest. We came upon the scene at a moment when all the indications pointed to a recent domestic calamity. We were informed by the driver that the occupant was blessed by an Indian wife, taken according to Indian rites, and that unhappy differences of opinion had agitated the domestic hearth within the period of twenty-four hours, which had deprived the establishment of its mistress, and which would materially affect the accommodations of the place. A notice which had just been posted in a conspicuous place upon the outer front wall of the family hut gave the only other information that we could gather concerning the family trouble. This was scrawled in plain but uncouth letters—Roman and Script intermixed—and was carefully copied into my diary. It reads as follows:

"Notice:—An oldish squaw about 30 ; blind in one eye—the left one ; a slight halt in one leg ; a thoroughbred. She has abandoned the ranch, and anyone who will get her back will receive two sacks of mezquite beans."

We were detained here for some four hours, and up to the time of our departure no person had come to claim the proffered reward.

From Chucawalla westward was the usual desert journey, undisturbed by incident, but still an experience that must have been undergone in order to be appreciated. No words can convey an adequate conception of the desolation of the mid-desert region. The stillness and silence are unbroken by any motion or sound except it be the vibration of the palpitating air under the torrid heat, or the voice of the driver as he urges the weary mules to renewed exertion. In one direction the view is swallowed up in the mirage, or exhausts itself over an endless expanse of sand, and in the opposite direction a reddish-brown sandstone bluff rims the horizon. But indigenous life there is none at all—nothing but sky and sand and sweltering heat. One might reasonably suppose that the twilight hour would bring some relief

from the oppressive heat, but, while the temperature of the night may have been much lower than that of the day there was always some compensating influence in the atmosphere of the night that made such change hardly, if at all, perceptible. The night breeze, if such there happened to be, was invariably so warm as to make it much more comfortable to screen the face from its contact than to invite exposure to its biting influence; while, in a calm, the constant radiation of heat from the burning sands of the preceding hours of day maintained the atmosphere at a temperature always above the normal heat of the human body.

In the first week of May, 1872, we arrived at Los Angeles and were duly delivered over to mine host of the Bella Union, Dr. J. B. Winston. Only about twenty-three years have elapsed, and yet the transformation of Los Angeles is the evolution of a great, populous city, instinct with business and industrial energy, from a mere business corner centered at the little plaza in front of Temple Block. There was then practically no city west of Hill street or south of Fifth street, and the outlying habitations within these limits were quite suburban. The entire hill districts of the city, in whatsoever direction, were the homes of the squirrel, the rabbit and the burrowing owl. The dreamer had not yet slumbered whose sanguine visions were thereafter to take form in the cities of Pasadena and Santa Monica and Pomona and Santa Ana. The erstwhile mound that raised its summit where our magnificent Courthouse building now stands was still crowned by the ocean sediment with which it emerged from the ancient sea. Broadway came to an abrupt termination in a bluff at a point between First and Franklin streets, while almost immediately above the line of the southerly sidewalk on Temple street there arose the crest of a ridge to nearly the same elevation as the present site of the Bradbury residence. The intervening gulch or ravine having been filled in by the demolition of this ridge is now the site of shapely residences that give forth no hint of the foundation upon which they rest.

And now when we contemplate the future, and see in the distance the archæologist of the fiftieth century excavating at this point and turning up the tons of broken china and refuse kitchen and household utensils that were dumped into that ravine some twenty-five or thirty years ago, we are prepared to prefigure his report: He has unearthed the ancient city that was destroyed by the northern invaders in the dreadful sack and pillage of 1846. But as I do not wish to further anticipate the scientific gentleman of A. D. 5000 I will leave him to finish his great work upon this plan.

Of course no archæologist of the future can possibly fall into any such grave and ludicrous error if the City of Los Angeles, or the County of Los Angeles, or if both of these municipal bodies combined will take immediate action in the matter of furnishing suitable permanent quarters for the museum and records of the Historical Society; and we should see to it that this purpose be persistently urged, not merely as a matter of expediency, but as an urgent necessity to preserve the truth of history.